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AUTHOR	Horton, James M.; Annalora, Donald J.
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ABSTRACT

The report examined the American Indian dropout rate for the fall semester, 1973-74, at Ft. Wingate High School (FWHS) in Gallup, New Mexico. For that period, the FWHS dropout rate was 26 percent, compared to a national average of about 25 percent (FWHS) statistics are for one semester; national statistics are for an entire year). Dropouts were defined as students who had enrolled in the Federal boarding school and later withdrew without completing a full year. Reasons for leaving were: (1) illness, (2) transferred to another school, (3) did not return from home leave, and (4) some kind of trouble. A questionnaire was developed and sent out to each of the identified dropouts, with a 35.4 percent return rate. Section A asked reasons for withdrawal, covering health; absence; parental influence; dorm conditions; and trouble with police, other students, or at home. The major reasons for dropping out were: (1) sent home for drinking or AWOL (17.2 percent); (2) stealing in dorms (16.6 percent); and (3) missed too many days. Things the respondents liked most about FWHS were counselors (92.7 percent), teachers (91.2 percent), and activities (90.6 percent). Things disliked most were other students (30.9 percent) and dorm staff (28.8 percent). Activities and classes were felt to be the best things about Wingate High School; drinking and stealing in the dorms were the worst. (KM)

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Eugene Leitka

THEME: SCHOOLS BELONG TO THE PEOPLE

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FOREWORD

The fifth issue of the BIA Education Research Bulletin places particular emphasis on works done by professional educators relative to quality of education programs. The Bureau is and always has had the upmost concern with high quality teaching for the Indian youngsters in the Bureau schools. This issue is devoted to that purpose of ever pursuing a better approach to teaching and the improvement of the profession of teaching.

Mr. Lary Shafer's study of group differentiation of teachers on the Papago reservation in which he compares the BIA teachers with public school teachers addresses itself to that issue of teacher competency and instructional improvement.

Beverly Anderson's educational needs assessment on Pine Ridge reservation and the student dropout study at Ft. Wingate High School both address themselves to the improvement of educational services to Indian people. When a school such as Wingate High School conducts an internal study for self-improvement and unbiasly makes its findings available to the public, then we can feel assured that there are educators with full commitments to improve our educational system.

Lloyd New points out the importance of taking into consideration the cultural differences that most certainly accounts for basic learning foundation among many Indian students. These differences, if recognized and nurtured properly, can provide the impetus necessary for creative expression.

This particular issue of the *BIA Research Bulletin* will receive evaluation examination from the BIA Research Council who have the role of an editorial review board later this summer. The board will seek ways to improve the type and quality of information that the bulletin will carry to the readers.

Clennon E. Sockey

Director

STUDENT DROPOUT STUDY OF FT. WINGATE HIGH SCHOOL*

James M. Horton and Donald J. Annalora

INTRODUCTION

This report covers the fall semester, August 28, 1973, to January 28, 1974. The dropout rate for that period was approximately 26 percent for Ft. Wingate High School (FWHS). The national dropout rate, according to "Education, USA, Special Report" is about 25 percent. The FWHS Study on dropout was for one semester only while the national rate covered a full school year. A total of 234 questionnaires were sent out and 83 were returned (35.4%).

Mr. Bruce J. Hoover, Principal of FWHS assigned two teachers to make a study of dropouts during the fall semester of 1973. Dropouts were defined as students who had enrolled in FWHS and later withdrew before completing a full school year. The list of dropouts was separated into groups according to the reasons given for leaving at the time of withdrawal. In order to have a workable number of categories, all reasons were condensed into the following: (1) illness, (2) transferred to another school, (3) did not return from home leave, and (4) some kind of trouble.

Procedure

A questionnaire was developed and sent out to each of the identified dropouts. In hopes of getting a usable percent of return, the questionnaire required little reading and only a checklist to mark for an answer. It was decided that a 30 percent return would be sufficient to establish trends. The percent return was 35.4 percent.

Questionnaire

Space was provided on the questionnaire for people who wished to write something, but the questionnaire could be filled

out and returned without any complications. No names were required. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was included so that a minimum of effort and no expense would be required in returning the questionnaire.

The three-part questionnaire was designed to find out why the students left, and in addition, to find out what students liked and did not like about FWHS. A third section gave replying drop-outs an opportunity to give their impressions of the best and the worst about the school.

*Ft. Wingate High School is a Bureau of Indian Affairs operated school with predominantly Navajo student population located near Gallup, New Mexico.

SECTION A

The reasons listed for student response were typical of reasons given at the time of withdrawal. A brief description of each of the items on the questionnaire is given here.

Health Reasons: This refers only to sickness, pregnancy, or any health reason affecting the student who left, but does not include students who left due to sickness of another member of their family.

Missed Too Many Days: School regulation's, as established by the school board, state that a student may not receive credits for a class in which he has missed more than eight days in a quarter, or 16 days in a semester. Some students reported leaving FWHS because they would not receive credit for their classes.

Parents Wanted Me To: Parents sometimes take their children home because of family problems, problems the child is having at FWHS, to take care of younger children, or to help with work at home.

Too Much Stealing In Dorms: Many students say they left FWHS because their personal belongings get stolen in the dorms. This appears to be a rather serious problem.

Wanted To Be Closer To Home: Students sometimes go to

another school that is closer to their homes because they miss family associations.

Problems With Dorm Attendants: Some students leave because they feel they cannot get along with the dorm staff.

Sent Away Because of Drinking or AWOL: Students who are frequently in trouble due to drinking or leaving the campus without checking out are taken home for "parental counseling". Many do not return.

Trouble With Police: A few students have said they left FWHS because of problems with police in Gallup.

Trouble With Students: The registrar's checkout sheet shows some students have left FWHS because of problems with other students such as "students don't respect others" and "other students get me into trouble drinking."

Trouble At Home: Any home problems that would cause a student to drop out of school are recorded.

Parents Moved Closer To a Public School: Many students come to FWHS because they live too far from a public school or from a bus route. Some checkout of FWHS when they are able to stay at home and attend a public school.

Sent Home Because of Ditching Classes: Some dropouts gave this as a reason for leaving school. Students who are at FWHS, but do not attend class (ditching) are taken home for "parental counseling". These students may come back to school, if accompanied by their parents. Many do not come back.

Other: The blank space was provided for dropouts who wished to write something that was not covered by the check list.

SECTION B

This section of the questionnaire was designed to find out what the dropouts had liked and what they had not liked about FWHS. Again, a check list was provided. Most of the respondents checked all of the areas under "like".

SECTION C

This section gave the dropouts an opportunity to respond to the open-ended statement, "the best thing about FWHS was," or "the worst thing about FWHS." Most of the students gave thoughtful answers, but many did not. An example of a non-serious response; "The best thing is the good looking chicks." This, of course, may be true, but stated in this way leaves some doubt as to the seriousness of the writer.

These and generalizations such as "everything" was best, were disregarded in the computations.

The Response

A record was kept of which students responded to the questionnaires when first sent out. A follow-up questionnaire was sent to each student who did not respond at first.

An inquiry was sent to each school to see if students actually enrolled in other schools. Of the 51 who dropped out to attend a specific school, 36 (70 percent) actually enrolled at that school.

When the questionnaires were received at Wingate, the responses were transferred to cards. These cards were separated into three sections, corresponding to the three parts on the questionnaires. The results are shown on the graphs and tables appended.

SUMMARY FINDINGS

The findings show that most of the dropouts liked the school generally, but had specific complaints. The biggest complaints were students drinking, going AWOL and students stealing from each other in the dorms. The next most serious problem was attendance, either being out of school too much or "ditching" classes while at school. The most significant disliked were "other students". The next most often-mentioned dislike was "dorm staff."

TABLE 1

This table shows actual enrollment in other schools by those students claiming to have transferred from Fort Wingate.

School	Number of Students Said Would Enroll	Did Enroll
1. Rough Rock	1	1
2. Cuba	4	2
3. Holbrook	2	2
4. Kayenta	1	1
5. Monument Valley	3	2
6. Window Rock	2	1
7. Intermountain	1	1
8. Aneth	1	1
9. Winslow	1	0
10. Flagstaff	2	1
11 Tohatchi	3	2
12. Shiprock	3	2
13. Thoreau	4	2
14. Sanders	1	1
15. Aztec	1	0
16. Many Farms	4	4
17. Crownpoint	5	4
18. Tuba City	2	1
19. Ganado	3	3
20. JFK (Gallup)	3	2
21. Navajo Mission	1	0
22. Ramah	2	2
23. Kirtland Central	1	1
TOTALS:	51	36
PERCENTAGE:	100	70.59

TABLE 2

Students' reasons for leaving Ft. Wingate High School.

Reason Given	Responses Number	Percent
1. Health Reasons	12	7.36
2. Missed Too Many Days	17	10.43
3. Parents Wanted Drop	15	9.28
4. Stealing In Dorms	27	16.56
5. Wanted to be Closer to Home	11	6.75
6. Problems with Dorm Staff	15	9.20
7. Sent Home-Drinking or AWOL	28	17.18
8. Trouble With Police	1	.61
9. Trouble at Home	14	8.59
10. Trouble With Other Students	7	4.29
11. Parents Moved	8	4.91
12. Sent Home-Ditching Classes	8	4.91
TOTAL:	163	

TABLE 3

Reasons for Withdrawal	Number of Responses
1. Loneliness	2
2. Got a job	2
3. Misunderstanding Between Students and Faculty	1
4. Got off to a Bad Start	1
5. Profanity in Class by a Teacher	1
6. Asked to Return to Another School	1
7. Girlfriend Dropped Out	1
8. The Student Thought He Could Not Return After the Second AWOL	1
TOTAL:	10

TABLE 4

Factor	Number of Responses	Percent Like	Dislike
1. Teachers	68	91.18%	8.82%
2. Classes	69	88.41%	11.59%
3. Counselors	68	92.65%	7.35%
4. Dorm Staff	72	72.22%	28.78%
5. Other Students	68	69.12%	30.88%
6. Food	69	85.51%	14.49%
7. Activities	64	90.62%	9.38%

TABLE 5

The best thing about Wingate High School was:

Answers	Number of Responses
Dorm	
1. Living in the dorm	5
2. Dorm Staff	2
3. Living in the honor dorm	1
School	
1. Classes	31
2. Teachers	12
3. Counselors	3
Students	
1. Other students	4
General	
1. Activities	38
2. Food	3
3. Sports	3
4. Close to town	1

TABLE 6

The worst thing about Wingate High School was:

Answers	Number of Responses
Dorm	
1. Stealing in dorms	14
2. The dorm staff	9
3. The dorm rules	5
School	
1. Classes	3
2. Teachers	2
3. Ditching	2
4. Being sent home	2
5. Too many vacations	1
Students	
1. Student behavior	13
2. Students lack of respect	9
3. Boy-girl problems	1
General	
1. Drinking	14
2. The lack of activities	5
3. AWOL's	5
4. The water	3
5. Litter	1
6. The weather	1

FT. WINGATE HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT STUDY

1974

QUESTIONNAIRE

Wingate High School is trying to determine the reasons why students have dropped out of our school. Your answers will help us improve Wingate for other students. Please check the following items and drop the enclosed envelope in the mail. No stamp is necessary.

Thank you for your interest and assistance.

A. I LEFT WINGATE HIGH SCHOOL BECAUSE:

(you may check one or more)

- ____ Health reasons
- ____ Missed too many days
- ____ Parents wanted me to
- ____ Too much stealing in dorms
- ____ Wanted to be closer to home
- ____ Problems with dorm attendants
- ____ Sent away because of drinking or AWOL
- ____ Trouble with police
- ____ Trouble with students
- ____ Trouble at home
- ____ Parents moved nearer a public school
- ____ Sent home because of ditching classes
- ____ Other (Explain) ____ _____

B. THINGS I LIKED OR DISLIKED ABOUT WINGATE HIGH SCHOOL:

Like	Dislike		Like	Dislike	
____	____	Teachers	____	____	Other Students
____	____	Classes	____	____	Food
____	____	Counselors	____	____	Activities
____	____	Dorm staff			

C. THE BEST THING ABOUT WINGATE HIGH SCHOOL WAS:

_____

_____

D. THE WORST THING ABOUT WINGATE HIGH SCHOOL:

_____

_____